

## **Field Notes - Methods Exercise (PNW, Fall 2025)**

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**Course:** Cultural Anthropology – Methods

**Institution:** [redacted]

**Dates of field visits:** Oct 18–22, 2025

**Location:** Olympic Peninsula, WA (mixed second-growth / old-growth margins)

*Typed from handwritten notebook. Any bracketed notes added for clarity.*

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### **Purpose / Scope**

Exercise focused on informal knowledge transmission related to forest use, navigation, and local narrative. Not a folklore study per se. No attempt made to verify claims. Observations recorded alongside environmental context as instructed.

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### **Day 1 (Oct 18)**

Weather overcast, light mist, ~50°F. Trails damp but navigable.

Spent ~3 hrs walking marked trail segments and adjacent spurs. Few people encountered.

Spoke briefly with older male hiker (60s?). Retired forestry worker. General comments about forest “feeling different now” compared to earlier decades. Likely nostalgia. No specific claims. He mentioned that people “don’t notice when they’re being steered anymore.” I assumed metaphor for trail signage / park management. Did not press.

Noted frequent pauses in birdsong when wind shifted. Probably nothing. Writing it down because we were told to record changes in ambient sound.

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### **Day 2 (Oct 19)**

Returned alone mid-morning. Fog thicker in low areas. Visibility variable.

Sat near a nurse log for ~25 minutes to practice stationary observation. Forest very quiet. No clear wildlife movement. Did experience a sense of orientation drift when standing up, as if I’d misjudged direction of trail. Corrected quickly after checking map. Possibly fatigue.

Heard intermittent whistling sound. High, narrow tone. Similar to wind through hollow branches or bottle neck. Source unclear. Did not repeat consistently enough to locate. No associated visual.

I wrote “wind?” in margin at the time.

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### **Day 3 (Oct 20)**

Short visit. Light rain.

Interviewed woman at trailhead (local, late 40s). She declined formal interview but spoke casually. Mentioned “watchers” as a joking explanation for why her dog avoids certain areas. Tone light. Laughed. I laughed too.

She said: “You don’t see them. You feel when you’re somewhere you shouldn’t be.”

Framed as intuition. Did not record her name.

I’m aware this sounds like leading, but she brought it up unprompted.

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### **Day 4 (Oct 22)**

Final visit. Afternoon.

Weather clearer. Forest felt louder, more normal. Almost disappointing.

While walking ridge section, again heard the whistling sound briefly. One instance only. This time followed by what might have been a distant whoop or echo. Hard to say. Distance makes scale impossible to judge. Could have been human.

Stopped writing for a bit after this. Nothing else happened.

On walk back, noticed I felt relieved without knowing why. Wrote “end of visit = relief?” in notebook. Not sure what that means.

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### **General Observations**

Local narratives often frame forest as active participant rather than setting. Language emphasizes guidance, warning, or “being kept away” rather than threat. This may function as informal safety protocol.

Environmental factors (fog, sound distortion, limited sightlines) likely amplify interpretive ambiguity. Important to avoid over-reading subjective impressions.

Still, multiple unrelated people used similar phrasing around “watching” and “guiding,” which is interesting linguistically if nothing else.

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### **Reflections (Methods)**

Not confident these notes amount to anything. Including them for completeness.

I am aware of how easy it is to project pattern onto coincidence, especially when alone for extended periods. Nothing observed here exceeds known environmental explanations.

That said, the consistency of certain phrases across speakers feels worth noting, even if only as a cultural tic.

Probably nothing.